

Day 12: Soda by PaperBodies

Series: Harringrove April Challenge [6]

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Summary:

Steve didn't find out about the bottle caps until they moved in together. The vast majority of their stuff was still in boxes, but there was a little wooden bowl full of bottle caps on Billy's nightstand when they went to bed that first night; it must have been one of the very first things he unpacked. Steve looked at it curiously; he thought he might have seen it in Billy's old room, but he hadn't been there enough times to be sure. He picked up one of the caps—a Coke logo emblazoned across the top—and flipped it over to find a date carefully written on the underside of it.

Day 12: Soda

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By the time Billy came back into the bedroom from the bathroom, Steve was back on his side of the bed, hands behind his head. Billy slid in next to him and snuggled up to Steve immediately, resting his head on Steve's chest.

"How does it feel?" Steve asked, "going to bed in our very own apartment?" Billy thought about it for a long moment.

"Really good," he finally said, wriggling a little bit to get more comfortable. Steve hummed in agreement. The only sound for a long time was their quiet breathing.

"Hey," Steve finally said quietly, "what's the story with the bottle caps?" He felt Billy tense up a little bit next to him. "I mean, you don't have to tell me," he said quickly, not wanting to mar their first night in their new place together with bad memories.

"No, it's okay," Billy said. He huffed. "It's just a little embarrassing." He took a breath. "My mom got me started collecting them when I was a kid. She had a bunch of them, and she used to put something on the underside of each one—a date or a word or a tiny little doodle to remember why she kept it. Neil made me throw them all out before we moved to Hawkins." Steve pulled Billy in closer, and pressed a gentle kiss to his temple.

"I'm sorry," he murmured. Billy shrugged.

"Not your fault."

"I know. But I'm still sorry your dad is a fucking asshole." Billy snorted a laugh and dropped a quick kiss on Steve's collarbone.

"Fuck him. I never have to see him again."

"Goddamn right," Steve agreed.

"Anyway, about six months after we moved, I started collecting caps again. The first one was from that night Max and I sort of made up." Steve nodded. He had heard the story before. "Neil slapped me around for a while and then left, and I just about panicked when I heard someone at the door. I thought he was back for more, but instead Max rolled in with a Coke bottle in one hand and a bag of frozen peas in the other. At first we just glared at each other, but then she tossed me the peas and told me to put them on my face and said she was sorry that it took her so long to figure it out." Steve nodded.

"And then you told her you were sorry for being a massive asshole," Steve provided.

"Mm, yes, and that kicked off the legendary Billy Hargrove apology tour of the spring of '85." Steve grinned.

"Hey, I don't think I got my apology until summer." Billy shrugged.

"That was the most important one," he said seriously. "I had to work my way up to it."

"It was a good one," Steve said, and leaned down for a kiss.

"Well yeah," Billy said. "I had a lot of practice by then."

"So what are the other caps from?" Steve asked, and Billy flushed a little.

"Lots of stuff," he said evasively.

"Like what?" Steve prompted. Billy rolled his eyes a little.

"Um, there's one in there from that day at the quarry with the nerds, actually. Like two weeks before I actually apologized."

“Yeah?” Steve asked, touched. “I remember that day. You were furious that Neil made you bring Max out to the quarry because you had to miss some big party for it.”

“Um,” Billy said, flushing further, and a grin spread across Steve’s face. “That’s not exactly....well. I may have offered to take Max to the quarry.”

“Why would you do that?” Steve asked, knowing exactly why. Billy rolled his eyes for real this time.

“Are you really going to make me say it, Harrington?”

“Yes, I am absolutely going to make you say it, Hargrove.” Billy huffed, mock exasperated. He actually loved how happy Steve got whenever Billy confessed to some new piece of evidence that he had wanted Steve for some time before they actually got together.

“I offered to drive Max because I knew you were going to be there,” Billy said, playing up his reluctance to say it.

“And then she ran off with the rest of the shitheads and you just sat in your car, pouting.”

“Excuse me, I was not pouting,” Billy protested.

“You absolutely were,” Steve said, smile growing wider.

“Agree to disagree,” Billy said. “Anyway, I was there in my car and you kept kind of glancing over, and then you sighed and dug into your cooler and brought over an absolutely ice-cold bottle of Coke and told me I looked hot.” Billy smirked, remembering it.

“Yeah, and then you shot me that exact same smirk,” Steve said.

“And you got all huffy and rolled your eyes and said, ‘You know what I meant.’ It was *adorable*.” Billy grinned at the memory. “And then you invited me to come hang out, to my immense surprise.”

“I didn’t actually invite you to hang out,” Steve said. “I just told you that you could get out of your car as long as you promised not to fight anyone.” There was a pause. “It was really hot, and I felt bad for

you.”

“Aw, you had a soft spot for me even then,” Billy said.

“Maybe,” Steve conceded, “but then you got out of your car and I regretted *everything*.” Billy raised an eyebrow.

“Why? I didn’t even do anything. I remember being on my very best behavior that day.”

“Because you were wearing the tightest cutoffs I had ever seen in my life and a goddamn crop top. I almost passed out on the spot.” Billy smiled and nuzzled a spot under Steve’s jaw.

“I wish you had said something. We could have snuck off into the trees to make out instead of sitting there in awkward silence all afternoon.” Steve shrugged.

“It stopped being awkward after the first hour or so.” Billy snorted. There was a long silence.

“I wanted to apologize that day,” he finally said quietly. “I just couldn’t get the words out.” Steve hugged him closer.

“You did eventually,” he said. “And you were already less of a dick, or I would have just left you in your car.” Billy didn’t say anything, and Steve hoped that he wasn’t getting lost in regrets.

“You don’t think it’s dumb?” Billy finally asked, voice small. “The bottle caps?” Steve waited until Billy glanced up at him to reply.

“No,” he said with a little smile. “I think your mom was right: it’s a nice way to remember good things.” Billy smiled back, but didn’t say anything. Instead he surged up to capture Steve’s mouth in a kiss.

“You know,” Billy said, pulling back just a little bit and rolling so that his body covered Steve’s, “I don’t think it’s really considered *our* apartment until we’ve fucked in it.” Steve smiled against Billy’s mouth.

“Well, in that case...” he said, tilting his head to get a better angle, and then Billy did that thing with his tongue and Steve didn’t say

anything coherent for a long time.

Author's Note:

Ok, so there's no actual soda in this story, but work with me.